

United States Congress

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 9, 2015

The Honorable Robert McDonald
Secretary
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary McDonald:

We were recently notified by regional VA leadership that the Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) located in Greenbelt, MD will close by the end of September 2015 as a result of the property owner's decision to sell the VA-leased space. While the sale of the property is out of the VA's control, the VA must ensure that the services provided at the Greenbelt CBOC be restored in northern Prince George's County.

As you may know, the Greenbelt CBOC serves a large number of veterans in the Northern Prince George's County Region. In FY14, the facility had 6,406 encounters of which 1,714 were unique. And in FY15 to date, the facility has had 4,240 encounters of which 1,559 were unique. According to the regional VA officials we met with, this facility is considered to be at maximum capacity. As we are sure you would agree, being at maximum capacity indicates there is a great need for a CBOC in this area.

Our understanding is that starting on September 14, 2015, the Greenbelt facility will transfer their doctors and services to an existing CBOC in Camp Springs, MD, approximately 16 miles away. We have asked regional officials for their plans to replace the Greenbelt CBOC. However we are extremely concerned that no such plans exist beyond an open ended assessment of the location to replace the clinic. Permanent closure of the Greenbelt CBOC would not only make access to services, including mental health services more difficult for our veterans, but it would cut the number of exam rooms in the region from 16 to 13.

We recognize that it would take some time and effort to find a new location for the Greenbelt CBOC, but the veterans in northern Prince George's County depend on the services provided there. Congress has been clear in our message to the VA—that you must do more to reduce barriers to care for our nation's veterans. Eliminating the Greenbelt CBOC without a plan to replace it is a step in the wrong direction.

We are asking that you look into this matter personally, and provide us with a plan to identify a suitable replacement CBOC in that immediate area. We appreciate your time, and consideration of our request.

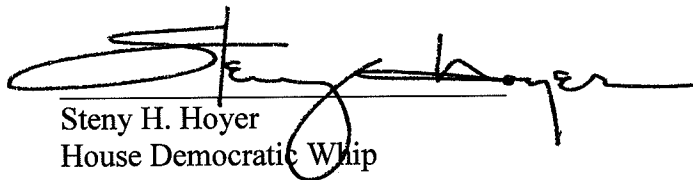
Sincerely,



Barbara A. Mikulski
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Steny H. Hoyer
House Democratic Whip